

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26 Meeting Notes May 23, 2002

Greetings and Introductions.

The May 23 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and facilitated by Richard Forester. The agenda and a list of attendees for the meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B. Hevlin led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda; he distributed the notes from the April SCT meeting, and asked that any comments be furnished to him prior to the SCT's June meeting..

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

2. Update on the FY'02 CRFM Funding and Recent Adjustments.

John Kranda distributed the most recent version of the CRFM measures worksheet (attached as Enc. C). He said there is nothing new to report on the funding front, including the possible availability of additional funding for FY'02. Our instructions are to keep marching, he said; there will be another nationwide meeting of the Corps on June 13, at which we hope to get some more positive news about additional funding and the restoration of savings and slippage. Kranda spent a few minutes discussing the potential impacts to the CRFM program if additional funds cannot be found, including the fact that some partially-funded contracts could carry over into FY'03, which will reduce the amount available for that fiscal year. The bottom line is that headquarters remains optimistic that additional FY'02 funds can be found, said Mike Mason.

If we don't find out about the additional funding until mid-June or July, are we going to have time to take action in 2002? Rod Woodin asked. One potential course of action, which we don't favor at this time, is not to award certain contracts, such as the contract for the B2 corner collector, Kranda replied. A brief discussion of the nuances of the Corps' bidding and award processes, as well as what flexibility exists to cancel or modify contracts if additional funds are not found, ensued. Mason reiterated that it is possible that the FY'02 shortfall, if it is not remedied, could significantly impact the amount available for the CRFM program in FY'03.

We'll discuss this issue further at the June SCT meeting, Hevlin said.

3. FY'03 CRFM Program.

Kranda distributed copies of the Corps Portland District and Walla Walla District work plans for FY'03; Mason noted that the transition pool work plan from Walla Walla District needs to be modified, and that a turbine study work plan needs to be added to the Portland District package. Kranda noted that the cost estimates for FY'03 and out-years have been updated; estimates that have changed are highlighted in dark grey.

The bottom line, he said, is that the total cost of the high-priority line-items has increased by just over \$8 million, and the hole gets even larger if we include the medium-priority line-items as well. One reason for that increase is the addition of the wall or walls at The Dalles - line-item 24, Kranda said -- that estimate is now \$8.5 million for FY'03. Hevlin noted that line-item 6 (Bonneville juvenile fish passage studies) also increased by \$1.5 million, to \$3.5 million; there was a similar increase in line-item 8, John Day biological studies. Rock Peters replied that the latter two increases were the result of more accurate cost estimates developed at the most recent FFDWG meeting.

The group spent a few minutes going through the other cost-estimate changes in the new spreadsheet, with Mason, Kranda and Peters explaining the reason for these changes. The bottom line is that our job has just gotten harder, said Hevlin, by about \$14 million. We also don't know for sure that Congress will give us \$98 million, said Kranda; if they don't, we're really going to have our work cut out for us. Particularly once you factor in savings and slippage, said Mason.

It was agreed that Kranda and Mason will update the "Descriptions" column of the spreadsheet prior to the next meeting; they will also provide further details about why various line-items changed, where appropriate. We'll also need to go through the spreadsheet item by item to discuss which items might be deferred, starting next meeting, Hevlin said. He asked the other SCT participants to come to the June meeting prepared to engage on that issue. At Bruce Suzumoto's request, Hevlin said it would also be possible to revisit the SCT's prioritization criteria at that meeting.

Ron Boyce suggested one potential approach to the re-prioritization process: for the SCT to attempt to come to agreement on the first \$80 million of absolute highest-priority items, then to develop a re-prioritized list of the high- and medium-priority line-items that would fall between \$80 million and \$98 million. There was general agreement that this might be a workable approach. Hevlin added that he will email the most recent version of the criteria out prior to the June meeting.

With that, Kranda distributed Enclosure D, a strawman future work-sheet which spreads CRFM work and funding out over the next eight fiscal years at approximately \$90 million per year -- \$731 million over the next eight years. He emphasized that this is a strawman, for discussion purposes only, and is not a formal Corps of Engineers proposal. Kranda explained that the highest-priority items on the list were designated 1 and 2, the lowest-priority items were designated 3 and 4. Ongoing line-items were designated 0.

By sheer coincidence, said Kranda, the items prioritized 1 and 2 come out at about \$90 million per year. He spent a few minutes describing how he developed his suggested priorities, ranking items that would produce the maximum survival improvement first, with critical research projects, projects at dams at which survival is already good, and other projects ranked as somewhat lesser priorities. He noted that the main change he is proposing relative to the current SCT priorities is that B1 corner collector construction would not be completed until FY'10. The bottom line, Kranda said, is that by 2010, under this strawman, we would complete all of the major survival improvement projects included in the 2000 BiOp, even if we have only \$90 million per year to work with in CRFM.

I think this is an excellent beginning, observed Bruce Suzumoto. Rock Peters noted that there is still a lot of work to be done, in terms of identifying, then funding, the additional studies that will be needed to fully evaluate performance toward the BiOp goals.

Next meeting, we'll discuss our SCT prioritization criteria to see whether or not they will allow us to go through the spreadsheet and re-prioritize it along the eight-year structure John is suggesting, Hevlin said.

4. Lower Monumental Configuration Analysis.

Lynn Reese of COE Walla Walla District briefed the SCT on the preliminary Lower Monumental configuration analysis, working from a series of overheads. Copies of this presentation are attached as Enclosure E; please refer to this document for full details. Main topic areas included:

- The relevant BiOp RPA (99)
- The Corps approach to the Lower Monumental analysis
- Analysis considerations
- The evaluation of alternatives
- A description of the System Passage Analysis Tool
- Some sample data
- Project/system scenarios studied (BiOp [base condition], operational changes, configuration and operational changes
- Fish species evaluated (spring chinook, steelhead, summer chinook)
- Initial flow conditions
- Configuration/operation scenarios included in the study (LSR/LCR existing system, dgas, dgas with e-screens, RSW, RSW/BGS, RSW/BGS and e-screens, two-unit SBC/BGS, two-unit SBC/BGS and two e-screens
- Potential LSR system changes
- Preliminary juvenile survival estimates under these various operational and configurational scenarios
- Preliminary cost estimates for each scenario
- A spreadsheet comparing estimated survival and cost for each potential alternative
- A comparison of the impacts of various potential operational changes
- What happens next? (FFDRWG/SCT subgroups? Evaluate logic/analysis procedures,

evaluate and fine-tune input parameters, select and evaluate alternative options, develop analysis and recommendations.

Reese described the main features and advantages associated with the Corps' System Passage Analysis Tool model. When he finished, Hevlin noted that he had been very happy with the outcome of the Bonneville Decision Document development process; he said he has hopes that the Corps will take a similar regional approach to the Lower Monumental configuration decision process. Reese replied that the Corps welcomes the input and participation of all interested parties in the Lower Monumental decision analysis.

Various SCT participants offered comments and suggestions, including the fact that the scope of the analysis needs to go beyond just Lower Monumental, because it has implications for many other FCRPS projects. Suzumoto suggested that the Corps' System Passage Analysis Tool may also benefit the SCT's prioritization process, because its purpose is to estimate changes in survival associated with various operational and configurational scenarios. There was general agreement that this is the case.

Boyce observed that, in his view, the spill up to the 120% TDG cap at Lower Monumental called for in the BiOp is the baseline; reducing spill from 120% to 110% TDG should not be on the table, in terms of being an operational alternative for the purposes of this study. Kim Fodrea disagreed, noting that the BiOp also instructs the action agencies that, if presented with two alternatives that produce the same survival benefit, they are to select the lowest-cost alternative. If we can get to the same survival benefit by spilling less but providing biological benefit in another area, Fodrea said, that needs to be a part of this analytical process.

Rod Woodin noted that, if this tool is to obtain regional buy-in, a broad-based subgroup needs to be convened to ground-truth its assumptions and inputs. He added that some of the alternatives included in the preliminary plan of study are extremely unrealistic. We are 100% behind the idea of getting broad regional input into both the modeling tool and the Lower Monumental configuration study process, Reese replied.

Where do we go from here? Forester asked. We need to convene a subgroup to address the scope of the study, values and parameters for the risk assessment, Hevlin said; in my mind, they have two years to fine-tune the tool and the analysis, because there are some important pieces of data, including performance and survival information with the new flow deflectors in place, that have not yet come in.

Ultimately, it was agreed that the Corps Walla Walla District will provide a project manager to chair and coordinate the subgroup; any SCT or FFDRWG member with an interest in the Lower Monumental configuration decision is invited to participate. Hevlin said he, Suzumoto, Tom Lorz, Steve Rainey and Ann Setter should be placed on the list of subgroup participants. Kranda said he will identify someone from Portland District to participate as well.

5. Adult and Juvenile PIT Detection Installation.

Hevlin said FFDRWG had asked that this be placed on today's agenda because a decision

needs to be made on the Ice Harbor adult PIT detection installation this month. Kim Fodrea said no decision was made at yesterday's APTOC meeting; as most of you have heard, there were some antenna problems with the detectors installed last year, but we have subsequently discovered that the leaking antennas are functioning just as well as the non-leaking antennas, she said. With respect to the newly-installed system in the McNary north shore fish counting window, that system is functioning extremely well, Fodrea said – it cost significantly less – about half – than an orifice system.

The question now is, what do we do next? Fodrea said. We could move to another dam, such as Ice Harbor or The Dalles, or attempt to improve the systems at Bonneville and McNary, Fodrea said. At yesterday's meeting, Gary Fredricks agreed to take this issue to FPAC, she said; the Corps' savings and slippage issue is a concern, because design work would need to start soon if installation is to proceed next winter, and the Corps is hurting for money at present, Fodrea said.

The bottom line is that the situation is up in the air at the moment, Fodrea said – the PIT detection installation question has not been resolved. Does that mean this item needs to come back at a future SCT meeting? Forester asked. Yes – there are some additional conversations and decisions that need to take place before we can weigh in, Hevlin replied. It was noted that there is funding available for the orifice system at Ice Harbor in the FY'02 budget; however, said Mason, we're now leaning toward a counting window system at Ice Harbor. There may be an opportunity to use the Ice Harbor orifice system money to install counting window detection systems at both Ice Harbor and Lower Granite, he added.

Mason noted that the Corps is moving ahead with designing a counting window PIT-tag detection system for Ice Harbor. In response to a question, Hevlin said PIT-tag detection at McNary, Ice Harbor and Priest Rapids is critical to the McNary transport study to determine if straying is a problem; and next year, there will be 400,000 PIT-tagged steelhead moving downstream through the system. The real question is, do we want to chase after the last few percentage points of detection at Bonneville or McNary, or would it be better to install detection capacity at another project, such as John Day or Ice Harbor? Fodrea said.

The group discussed the feasibility of installing additional detection capability at Bonneville, given time and funding constraints. Fodrea noted that, physically, Bonneville is a much more difficult installation than McNary was. Ultimately, Fodrea and Fredricks agreed to put together two or three PIT detection alternatives for presentation to FPAC and APTOC; the results of those deliberations will then be presented at the next SCT meeting. Basically, you need to put together some clearer alternatives for the SCT to discuss, Hevlin said; at the moment, there is too much difference of opinion about what it is feasible and most desirable to do with this project.

A month from now will be too late to award a contract, Fodrea said. Let me know when you've narrowed the list of alternatives down to two, and I'll convene an SCT conference call, Hevlin said. It was further agreed that Fredricks will ask FPAC for their thoughts as to the next project where full-flow bypass juvenile PIT detection should be installed. Mason noted that, if it is to be installed prior to the 2003 migration season, this decision needs to be made soon.

6. Updates.

A. McNary Spillway Operations. Marvin Shutters said the bridges have now been removed, but a number of gantries and hoists are still out of service. We are opening three of the bays manually three feet; they will stay in that position 24 hours a day, Shutters said. We have been discussing spill patterns with FPOM, he continued; Fredricks noted that the current spill pattern has some problems under high-flow conditions. It's not a great pattern under a number of flow conditions, said Shutters, but it's the best we've been able to come up with. The bottom line is that the flow deflector operational concerns have now been resolved, but the gate hoists are expected to be out of service for an indeterminate period.

B. Lower Granite RSW Evaluation. Tim Wick reported that the RSW biological evaluation has been extended through June 8, a week later than originally planned. We've had 39 test days so far, 27 of which have met our planned operational criteria, he said. The main reason more days didn't meet the planned operation is the powerhouse outage at Lower Granite, he explained. Once the biological test is complete, we'll move on to the sinking and retrieval test, said Wick; the actual test will take place during the week of June 24. He added that there are no preliminary results available from the RSW survival test, other than visual observations that fish have been passing the structure. When will we have some results? Boyce asked. The preliminary hydroacoustic study report is due out in mid-July, Wick replied.

C. Portland District FFDRWG. Kranda distributed a handout summarizing the discussion of various issues at the most recent Portland District FFDRWG meeting; main topic areas included the B2 corner collector, the Bonneville Decision Document, Bonneville JBS follow-up, B2 FGE, The Dalles survival study, The Dalles spillway improvement study, The Dalles SGID, The Dalles outfall, John Day FPE/survival, John Day ESBS, John Day RSW, John Day south shore fish jumping, adult studies, adult PIT detection, full-flow PIT tag detection, Bonneville flow deflectors and high-flow PIT detection. He noted that the next Portland District FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for July 15.

D. Walla Walla District FFDRWG. Marvin Shutters said the main topics discussed at the most recent Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting have already been discussed at today's meeting. The next Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for July 24-25

7. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, June 27. The SCT's July meeting was changed to Thursday, August 1, to be followed by another meeting on Thursday, August 22. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.